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ABSTRACT

This report, the fourth part of a long-range study of persistence and performance in California's community colleges, deals with the performance of the 82 percent of the 35,000 student sample who entered the California community college system in fall 1972 and completed at least one term. Sixty percent of the total sample continued beyond one term, and 22 percent completed the first term, but did not continue. The various performance measures that are analyzed in this report include course grades and other final actions (withdrawals), semester grade point averages, unit loads attempted in relation to grade point averages, and incidences of withdrawal from classes. Sources of variance in performance are examined, including first-time freshmen versus transfer students, day versus evening students, men versus women, and persisters versus students who enrolled for only the first term. Data are organized into five tables, and generally show that the records of students who discontinued after one term were not as good as those of persisters. It is possible, however, that many students who were classified as completing one term and not continuing were not attending classes at the end or failed to take final examinations, but were not recorded by the college as total withdrawals. (Author/NHM)

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Commission Report 1-74
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A Limited View of Performance

THROUGH THE OPEN DOOR

A Study of Persistence and Performance in California's Community Colleges

Prepared by the staff of the
California Postsecondary Education Commission

JC 760 237

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Spring 1974

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Background

[redacted]

1. [redacted]
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[illegible] Chapter 11 - Assignment of Interests[illegible]

[illegible] Assignments. The corresponding blank in a document pertaining to assignments usually refers to the assignor or to the assignee, but it may refer to a party who is neither. The assignor is the party who is entitled to or has [illegible] assigning [illegible] assignments.

[illegible] Assuming Obligations. The corresponding blank in the provision pertaining to obligations assumed usually refers to the party who assumes the obligations. It may refer to the party who is relieved of the obligations, or it may refer to a third party who is neither. The party who assumes [illegible] or who is relieved of [illegible] obligations [illegible] under contracts is the corresponding [illegible].

Any party to the assumption of [illegible] obligations [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

found, 97 percent of the grades in vocational courses were passing or credit, compared with only 80 percent of the grades for all other courses. The major difference between the two distributions was found in the incidence of withdrawals, with none shown for vocational courses and 15 percent for all others. At the second college, grades in vocational courses were only slightly higher than those in all others, and the incidence of withdrawals was only slightly lower. Thus the analysis for two colleges produced no conclusive findings with respect to performance in vocational courses.

Table 3. First Term Grade-Point Averages Earned by Various Groups of Students Who Completed at Least One Term

Data in Table 3 illustrate the differences between students who persisted beyond the first term and those who were enrolled at the end of the term but did not continue the following semester or quarter. The students who withdrew during the term are not shown in the table since they earned no grades. They constituted 18 percent of the total sample and from 8 to 24 percent of the subgroups.

D

Differences between the various pairs of grade-point averages for students who continued (persisters) and discontinued (non-persisters) are all in the direction of higher grades for the persisters. All averages are at least a C, and the average for the transfer students who persisted about a B. The largest differences between groups are found for the first-time freshmen and the part-time students. In each instance, the difference between the persisters and non-persisters is 0.7 grade-point, which is significant on what amounts to a three-point grading scale, i.e., A (4.0), B (3,0), and C (2.0). The high incidence of non-persisters whose averages were near zero had a considerable impact on the group average. However, the several types of analysis appear to indicate that non-persisters as a group did not perform as well as students who continued their enrollment into the spring term.

Grade-point averages were computed for the various sub-groups based on the total number of units attempted. Since differences were quite small, the groups were combined for Table 3. However, group averages for students enrolled for fewer than four units were consistently higher than those of part-time students enrolled for at least four but fewer than twelve units. Full-time students as a group earned averages which were higher than those enrolled for at least four but fewer than twelve units, but lower than those of students enrolled for three or fewer units. Group averages for day and evening students were also compared. Averages for the latter group, who enrolled for fewer units because of constraints on their time, were consistently higher than those of day students with similar unit loads. Among the 15 sub-groups for whom averages were computed, first-time freshmen enrolled for more than three but fewer than twelve units received the lowest grades. Transfer students enrolled for no more than three units received the highest. Report 3 on persistence showed that both groups experienced a loss of about 50 percent after one term.

Table 3

First-Term Grade-Point Averages Earned by Various Groups of Students who Completed at Least One Term

Type of Student	Status at End of Term	Percent of Group[1]	Grade-Point Average[3]
Freshman	Continued	63%	2.73
	Discontinued	20	2.08
Transfer	Continued	51	3.03
	Discontinued	28	2.65
Part-Time[2]	Continued	49	2.73
	Discontinued	27	2.33
Full-Time[2]	Continued	79	2.75
	Discontinued	13	2.09
Total	Continued	60	2.73
	Discontinued	22	2.31

1. Remainder of the group withdrew during the term without grades.

2. Part-time students were enrolled for fewer than twelve units, full-time for twelve or more units at the fall census week.

3. A = 4.00, B = 3.00, C = 2.00.

Table 4. Distribution of First-Term Grade-Point Averages by Units Attempted

Data in Table 4 are simply a different representation of the mean grade-point averages in Table 3. The distributions of averages reveal differences among groups enrolled for various unit loads that are of some interest. The distribution of grades for full-time students included lower percentages of near-perfect and very unsatisfactory averages. Students enrolled for three or fewer units, on the other hand, tended to earn grades at the extremes, i.e., A, B, or F in what was usually only one course. In any case, it is notable that among the persisters only 10 percent earned first-term averages which might put them in academic jeopardy if their performance did not improve in subsequent terms. However, 21 percent of the course enrollments by persisters did not result in letter grades. Colleges that have adopted probation policies based on "progress points" may impose academic probation on students who do not complete some minimum portion of the total program attempted. No attempt has been made in the present analysis to estimate the number of students who would be subject to probation on the basis of progress points, because of the complexity of policies and their apparent unfairness to certain types of part-time students. Attention will be given to this problem in a subsequent report.

Table 5. Percentages of Students Withdrawing From Courses During the Fall Term, by Total Units Attempted

About 32 percent of the students who completed the fall term withdrew from at least one course. This percentage is about the same for both persisters and students who discontinued at the end of the first term. The highest incidence of withdrawal was found to be among students enrolled full time, who accounted for almost two-thirds of the withdrawals from particular courses although not from the college. Entries in Table 5 should be interpreted as in the following example: full-time students (12 or more units attempted) who withdrew from half- and one-unit courses accounted for 5 percent of all withdrawals from courses. It appears that many full-time students enrolled for more units than they intended or were able to complete and did not withdraw until after the fourth census week.

An attempt was made to analyze the dates when students withdrew from classes, in terms of the individual college calendars. Many colleges recorded such dates on the records supplied for use in the study. However, many entries appeared to lack face validity. For example, one college showed all withdrawal dates after the close of the semester. Others apparently posted all withdrawals on a particular day, regardless of when they actually occurred. Therefore, much of the information had to be discarded. Data from colleges with apparently valid withdrawal dates seem to indicate that the percentage of students who enroll at least to the midterm is between 60 and 70.

Table 4

Distributions of First-Term Grade-Point Averages by Units Attempted (In Percents)

Grade-Point Average	Units Attempted by Persisters*				Non-Persisters*
	1 - 3	4 - 11	12 or More	Total	
3.5 - 4.0	31%	20%	14%	20%	21%
3.0 - 3.4	31	22	24	25	22
2.5 - 2.9	1	17	27	18	6
2.0 - 2.4	21	25	22	23	19
1.5 - 1.9	<1	8	8	7	3
1.0 - 1.4	4	5	2	4	5
Below 1.0	11	3	<1	3	24
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Percent Attempting Various Loads	19	42	39	100	100

* Persisters are students who continued into the spring term after first enrolling in the Fall 1972 term. Non-persisters were still enrolled at the end of the fall term but did not continue into the spring.

Table 5

Percentages of Students Withdrawing From Courses During the Fall Term by Total Units Attempted*

Unit Value of All Courses Dropped	Total Units Attempted			
	1 - 6	7 - 11	12 or More	Total
1 or less	22	22	51	95
2 - 3	9	20	26	45
4 - 6	1	8	18	27
7 - 11	--	3	11	14
12 or more	--	--	5	5
Total	12	23	65	100
N	940	1,877	5,293	8,110

* Percentages do not include students who withdrew from all courses during the fall term, who constitute 18 percent of the sample.

Finally, a comparison was made of the grade-point averages of persisters and non-persisters who withdrew from at least one course during the fall term. Both groups showed significantly lower averages than those earned by students who completed all courses, although the withdrawals did not affect the average based on grades earned in other courses. For example, only 28 percent of the students who withdrew from courses earned a grade-point average of 3.0 or better, compared with 63 per cent of all students who completed the fall term. Forty-six percent of the latter group earned averages between 3 and 4, compared with less than one-third of the total group. Students who withdrew from one or more courses but persisted into the second term also earned higher averages than those who discontinued after completing one term. The major difference occurred at the bottom of the grading scale, with 29 percent of the non-persisters with some earned averages.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This limited analysis of performance of Community College students during their first term of enrollment has yielded considerable evidence of their high level of performance in courses completed. Both grades and grade-point averages are high, particularly for students who persisted beyond the first term. Few penalty grades were received for this group. The persistence of withdrawal from courses to persisters was lower than expected. However, only 60 percent of the sample of 35,000 students examined for a second term.

The record of students who discontinued after one term is not as good as the record of those who persisted. It is possible that many students who did not attend classes at the end, or failed to take final examinations, but were not recorded by the college as total withdrawals. In any case, students who withdrew from one or more courses and/or discontinued after one term did not display the same high level of performance as those who persisted. Reasons are by no means clear; however, the differences are significant.

A Further Look

A companion paper will consider the policies and issues which are related to the performance data, in an attempt to explain differences and perhaps to suggest policy changes which would result in greater equity to non-persisting students and the institutions in which they were enrolled.

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[illegible]	Area of Search			Nature Accreditation
	[illegible] Boundaries	[illegible] Properties	[illegible] Hours	
[illegible] Bureau	1,247	186	1,247	Mrs. [illegible]
[illegible]	847	203	1,276	Mr. [illegible]
[illegible]	642	114	498	Mr. [illegible]
[illegible]	417	298	298	Mr. [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible]	1,203	417	1,211	Mr. [illegible]
Mr. [illegible]	1,384	276	1,384	Mr. [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible]	963	214	1,178	Mr. [illegible]
[illegible]	427	89	516	Mr. [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible]	784	218	1,276	Mr. [illegible]
[illegible]	896	176	1,247	Mr. [illegible]
[illegible]	647	486	1,486	Mr. [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible]	1,247	394	1,256	Mr. [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible] [illegible]	784	486	1,417	Mr. [illegible]
[illegible]	647	214	498	Mr. [illegible]
[illegible]	784	342	784	Mr. [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible]	214	342	1,247	Mr. [illegible]
[illegible]	416	147	416	Mr. [illegible]

Assessment Area/Topic	Study Of Impacts			Mitigation Recommendations
	Impact Assessment	Impact Evaluation	Significance Rating	
Air Quality Assessment	Low	Minor	Low	Use dust barriers
Noise Assessment	Medium	Moderate	Medium	Schedule blasting
Water Resources	Low	Minor	Low	Monitor groundwater
Biodiversity Study	High	Major	High	Relocate vegetation
Visual Landscape	Low	Minor	Low	Plant screening trees
Archaeological Survey	Low	Minor	Low	Record and document
Traffic Management Review	Medium	Moderate	Medium	Limit peak hour movements
Soil Erosion Study	High	Major	High	Install silt fences
Waste Management Plan	Medium	Moderate	Medium	Recycle where possible
Socio-Economic Impact	Low	Minor	Low	Local employment
Flora Survey	Low	Minor	Low	Avoid sensitive areas
Fauna Survey	Low	Minor	Low	Seasonal restrictions
Hydrological Assessment	Medium	Moderate	Medium	Buffer zones
Cultural Heritage	Low	Minor	Low	Consult stakeholders
Total	15	12	15	